

# LOUISIANA SHRIMP TASK FORCE

## MINUTES

September 8, 2009

ROBERT BARHAM  
CHAIRMAN

LOUISIANA ROOM  
LOUISIANA DEPARTMENT OF WILDLIFE & FISHERIES  
2000 QUAIL DRIVE  
BATON ROUGE, LOUISIANA

## AGENDA

1. Call meeting to order
2. Introduction of members

3. Election of co-chairman
4. Executive order BJ09-13
5. Agency updates
6. Review/approval of Shrimp Task Force Advisory  
Panels creation/membership
7. Set next meeting date
8. Agenda items for consideration
9. Public comment

MINUTES OF THE MEETING  
OF  
THE LOUISIANA SHRIMP TASK FORCE

Tuesday, September 8, 2009, 1:30 PM

Chairman Robert Barham, Louisiana Department of Wildlife & Fisheries, presiding.

Jody Montelaro – Louisiana Governor’s Office  
Dr. Mike Strain (represented initially by Dr. Carrie Castille) –  
Louisiana Department of Agriculture and Forestry  
Kelsey Short – Louisiana Department of Economic Development  
Cathy Breaux – Louisiana Workforce Commission  
Stacy Deblieux – Louisiana Attorney General’s Office  
Amy Courtney – Louisiana Department of Health and Hospitals

Absences

Kris Van Orsdel – Louisiana Recovery Authority

Chairman Barham recognized Representatives Jerry Gisclair, Joe Harrison and Robert Billiot for their attendance at the meeting and for their continued communication and cooperation with the Department of Wildlife and Fisheries.

Chairman Barham described the duties the Task Force shall provide as outlined in Governor Jindal’s Executive Order BJ 09-13:

“The Task Force shall examine the Louisiana shrimp industry as a whole, identify areas of concern or problems endemic to the industry, and develop plans or propose policies which can improve the economic sustainability of the industry.

Issues the Task Force should examine, but which the Task Force is not limited to, are: the effect of the current global economic slowdown on local markets; the impact of foreign produced shrimp on domestic markets, and ways to improve demand for domestic

produced shrimp; the health and safety concerns of foreign produced shrimp; and the various possibilities to increase the marketing and promotion of Louisiana shrimp.”

Opening words by Chairman Barham explained that all agencies represented on the Task Force shall provide representation and will have their voice on the future direction of the Louisiana shrimp industry. The Task Force is here to examine factors such as the economic slow-down, the presence of foreign shrimp, low demand, health and safety, marketing and promotions as they affect the Louisiana shrimp industry.

Request made by Chairman Barham for Task Force approval for him to create a 13 member advisory group composed of shrimpers, with a complete geographical representation from across the state. The thirteen members shall elect a representative to serve as the shrimper panel advisor to the Task Force. An additional 13 member advisory group composed of processors was also requested. This group shall also elect a representative to serve as the processor panel advisor to the Task Force.

Additional suggestion was made stating that only actual shrimpers and processors be represented on these advisory groups.

**Motion was made by Dr. Castille to request that Secretary Barham appoint a 13 member shrimper advisory panel. Motion seconded by Mr. Montelaro. Motion carried unanimously.**

**Motion was made by Dr. Castille to request that Secretary Barham appoint a the 13 member shrimp processor advisory panel. Motion seconded by Mr. Montelaro. Motion carried unanimously.**

Chairman Barham introduced Randy Pausina, LDWF Assistant Secretary, Office of Fisheries and announced that Mr. Pausina will serve as his designee on the Task Force. Chairman Barham asked for a motion to elect a co-chair.

**Mr. Montelaro moved to nominate Dr. Mike Strain, Commissioner of the Department of Agriculture as co-chair of the Task Force. Motion seconded by Dr. Castille. Motion carried unanimously.**

Kelsey Short, Department of Economic Development explained ideas that his department has to assist in providing feasible economic solutions to the shrimp industry. Mentioned the idea of branding Louisiana wild-caught shrimp as a way to identify Louisiana product and create demand and the availability of seed money from DED for a branding program.

Cathy Breaux, Louisiana Workforce Commission, presented information on the Trade Adjustment Act. She stated that farmers’ assistance programs that are starting in October will have elements that will benefit shrimpers along with the upstream and downstream workers in the shrimping industry.

Stacy Deblieux, Attorney General's Office, noted that the Attorney General would be looking at the problems from several angles, including consumer protection.

Jody Montelaro, Governor's Office, has been working with LDWF and all agencies on these issues.

Amy Courtney, Department of Health and Hospitals, reported that DHH's primary roles are inspection and permitting of processors.

Dr. Carrie Castille, Department of Agriculture, stated that they were looking into the Department's statutory authority and branding possibilities and would serve on the new Seafood Safety Task Force.

Dr. Mike Strain from the Department of Agriculture and Forestry agreed to provide cooperation along with the evaluation of the quality and monitoring of shrimp products.

Randy Pausina stated that the Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries' main objective is to manage the shrimp fishery and make sure it's sustainable. He explained that the department is currently handling the distribution of fishery grant money from past hurricanes and outlined the work that's being done to put these funds in the hands of shrimpers and processors as soon as possible. R. Pausina asked all present to include e-mail addresses in their sign-in information to facilitate efficient communication. He explained that the Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries (LDWF) has been coordinating with the Gulf States Marine Fisheries Commission (GSMFC) and state natural resource agencies in the Gulf to identify and compile each state's specific regulations governing seafood inspections, packaging and labeling and seafood promotion and marketing programs and the respective agencies delegated these responsibilities. Once compiled and reviewed, the LDWF hopes to use these in developing model regulations which could be implemented among the States to provide and enhance regulatory consistency in packaging and labeling, public health concerns and their enforcement as well as shrimp promotion and marketing.

Kris Van Orsdel from the Louisiana Recovery Authority was unable to attend, but Randy Pausina provided copies of his written report to fellow Task Force members for review.

Chairman Barham invited the legislators in attendance to comment.

Representative Billiot expressed his thanks to state government and all of the hours and funding that have led to the creation and future existence of the Task Force. Rep Billiot requested the creation of some form of identification mark that would officially mark all Task Force documentation.

Dr. Mike Strain was granted time to comment on the marketing of Louisiana shrimp products.

Representative Billiot commented that the shrimping industry is looking for results and would like weekly reports to include how much time agency staff puts in.

Representative Gisclair commented that communications are vital to expedite help in saving the shrimp industry from collapse. He commended the inclusion of shrimpers input to the Task Force with the creation of the shrimpers advisory panel.

Representative Harrison explained the severe impact storms have had on the industry and the need to expedite funding sources to the shrimpers. Rep. Harrison would like to see disaster assistance payments expedited from 100/week to perhaps 500/week. He commented on the problem that unregulated imports of shrimp place on Louisiana shrimp products. Rep. Harrison expressed the need for economic development and marketing of Louisiana shrimp. Rep. Harrison also suggested a system be put in place to insure the proper inspection of imported products that would be paid for by the importers. He also stated that this would reduce the current problems of mislabeling of foreign products. He referenced that thirteen bills are currently in either the U.S. House or Senate that are directly related to problems with imported shrimp. These bills could be amended with further ideas about how to help the shrimp industry.

Chairman Barham stated that legislation will be critical to the industry and welcomes the help of Representatives Gisclair, Harrison, and Billiot.

Public comment received from Clint Guidry of the Louisiana Shrimp Association commending all attendees and the Governor for his immediate action in creating the Louisiana Shrimp Task Force.

Eddie Hayes, a lawyer, international trade law professor from Loyola and Tulane University, representing the American Shrimp Processors Association offered the Task Force help with addressing imports and the trans-shipment of foreign shrimp products. Commented that despite what media sources may suggest, there is strong cooperation among Louisiana shrimpers and shrimp processors and the two industries are dependent upon one another.

Dr. Mike Strain asked E. Hayes if the processors would support unannounced inspections of their facilities to be sure foreign shrimp are not being re-packaged and marketed as Louisiana shrimp through cooperative endeavors, and erasing the wording of current legislation that place restrictions on the inspection process. Dr. Strain stated that he was meeting with the delegation in D.C. this week as well as the southern agriculture commissioners and requested any input from the Task Force members. He emphasized need for uniform, certified, branded, product for the European market.

E. Hayes stated that he would recommend his clients support inspections and would take the concept to his clients.

In closing, Randy Pausina acknowledged a need for ex-officio members, and asked the Task Force for recommendations to provide the Governor. Stated that a key goal of the meeting today was to establish the advisory panels. He stated that a Task Force web page would be set up. Next meeting was set for Monday, September 14<sup>th</sup> at 1:30 pm in the same location. R. Pausina stated that this is a good opportunity for the State of Louisiana to lead the way.

Rep. Harrison brought up the need to bring the Louisiana Restaurant Association to future meetings to gain their input on the current issues.

**Jody Montelaro moved to adjourn, second by Stacy Deblieux. Motion passed.**

Meeting adjourned at 2:35 p.m.